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Firm moves to old Lenox glass
plant to develop it

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Owens S. Taylor, president of Pittsburgh Electric Engines
Inc., shows a testing station for fuel cells at the facility in Mount Pleasant Township.

Twenty
years ago, glass factories in the Mount
Pleasant area employed up to 1,100 people, making
glass the township's trademark manufacturing product.

Slowly, though, the factories began to move their operations and jobs
elsewhere, eventually leaving the township with no large-scale glass
operations.

Engineer Owen Taylor hopes to once more make the township a center of
manufacturing -- not of glass, but of the Turbo Fuel Cell Engine, which would
use 40 percent less fuel than diesel engines and have virtually no emissions.

He and the nine other engineers of Pittsburgh Electric Engines Inc. are
still in the process of developing that engine.

Mr. Taylor, also the chief executive officer of PEEI, recently moved his
research facility from Derry to the Mount
Pleasant building that used to hold the Lenox glass
factory.

Township officials and those of neighboring Mount Pleasant Borough lobbied

to get the facility opened. The hope was that when the turbo fuel cell engine becomes commercially viable, an engine plant will be built there, with the potential to provide several hundred jobs -- a dire need for the region.

"There's no manufacturing base in our town," said Jerry Lucia, mayor of Mount Pleasant Borough.

Mr. Taylor opened the facility in Derry after he was awarded a \$2.9 million grant from the U.S. Army to develop the engine. He had originally pitched it as an engine for military vehicles.

At that time, Mr. Taylor said the company could employ up to 40 people, even though the development of the engine was not complete.

Since 2004, with the help of U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Johnstown, he has obtained an additional \$6.5 million in Department of Defense funding. But peak employment at his company was 19. It is now 10.

In July 2006, funding dried up and the operation had to be shut down.

Mr. Taylor said this is because the military's research and development funds took a hard hit due to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the war in Iraq. But he's confident he'll have enough money to keep the operation going.

It started back up in August.

Still, Mr. Taylor does not have a time line for when an engine plant will be built. Before it gets to that point, he said, it must be completed then tested extensively.

But officials are patient and said they are confident the machine plant eventually will be built.

"The biggest hurdle is behind them. ... At the most, we're looking at seven years, but we're figuring in five it'll be up and running," said township Supervisor Duane Hutter, one of Mr. Taylor's biggest advocates.

"[The Army] wouldn't put this much money into it if they didn't think it was going to work."

Mr. Lucia said the uncertainty does concern him, but he has confidence in

Mr. Taylor.

"If he has the dream, I have the same dream," he said. "This is for the youth. This is for the next generation."

They point to the fact that with rising fuel prices, a fuel-saving engine could have mass commercial appeal, as well as military applications.

"You couldn't ask for a better time with the way the economy is," said Supervisor Frank Puskar of Mount Pleasant Township.

They also said that a machine plant not only would provide jobs, but have a ripple effect on the local economy because it would draw people into the area.

"It's a big manufacturing process," Mr. Puskar added. "You have 500 people working here and you got a restaurant here, a sub shop here."

In addition, Mr. Taylor said, the Latrobe area has the highest concentration of machine shops in the country. He has pledged to contract local shops to make smaller components of the diesel engine.

But local officials also thinking bigger, about the potential that the engine could have in weaning the country off of its dependence on foreign oil. (The engine still requires diesel fuel, though.)

"This is something that we can build and make, and we don't have to depend on oil," Mr. Hutter said.